

New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission
Generic Investigation Into Utility Poles
Docket No. DM 05-172
Commission Staff's Fifth Set of Data Requests (Topic Four)
Responses of Unitil Energy Systems, Inc.

Request No. Staff 5-1:

Electrics & VZ – Please provide your company practice and policy for extending aerial service in your maintenance area to a new residential customer where poles are placed on private property. Please include charges to the customer for poles, wire, ancillary equipment and any credit given to the customer for billing to the joint pole owner.

Response:

In accordance with UES' Tariff, we provide one pole, one anchor and extend our single phase line up to 300 feet including a normal service drop. In this case, the customer would only be charged a recording fee for the pole easement.

UES charges the customer the cost for labor and material for any additional poles, anchors, and wire in excess of the first 300 feet. Credits are provided to the customer for billing to the joint owner at the present rate of \$575.00 per pole.

Person Responsible: Dale Nudd, Scott D. Wade Date: July 19, 2006

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Request No. Staff 5-2:

Electrics & VZ - Please provide your company practice and policy for extending aerial service in your maintenance area into a new residential subdivision where poles are placed on private property. Please include charges to the customer for poles, wire, ancillary equipment and any credit given to the builder/owner for billing to the joint pole owner.

Response:

Please refer to response 5-1.

In addition to response 5-1, UES would collect, in advance, an amount equal to the total cost to install the overhead line in a subdivision. This amount is refunded as permanent meters are set. In other words, the total payment is divided by the anticipated number of permanent services, and as the permanent services are installed, the refunds are disbursed. If a lot exceeds one pole, one anchor, and 300 feet of wire, that customer is billed in accordance with response 5-1.

Person Responsible: Dale Nudd, Scott D. Wade

Date: July 19, 2006

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Request No. Staff 5-4:

Electrics & VZ – Please provide your company practice and policy for extending aerial service in your maintenance area to a new commercial customer where poles are placed on private property. Please include charges to the customer for poles, wire, ancillary equipment and any credit given to the customer for billing to the joint pole owner.

Response:

Please refer to response 5-1.

If the customer/developer requests a 3-phase line extension, in addition to the cost detailed in response 5-1, the customer/developer also pays, in advance, the labor and material costs for the additional 2 phases.

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Request No. Staff 5-5:

Electrics & VZ - Please provide your company practice and policy for extending aerial service in your maintenance area into a new commercial subdivision where poles are placed on private property. Please include charges to the customer for poles, wire, ancillary equipment and any credit given to the builder/owner for billing to the joint pole owner.

Response:

Please refer to response 5-1, 5-2 & 5-4.

Person Responsible: Dale Nudd, Scott D. Wade **Date:** July 19, 2006

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Request No. Staff 5-8:

Electrics & VZ – In general, what is the process for informing customers of the status of their service order and specifically how are delays in pole placement communicated to the customers?

Response:

UES monitors the status of pole sets based upon customers need dates. Should we become aware of delays, that information is provided to the customer through our Customer Projects Coordinator. This communication is most often provided by telephone.

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Request No. Staff 5-9:

Electrics & VZ - Does your company have practices or policies governing the timely placement of poles for new service? If yes, please provide copies or a narrative explaining the specific practices or policies.

Response:

Refer to UES response to Staff1-32.

Single pole sets

- UES maintenance area: Once the project is ready for pole staking (driveway is constructed, the location of the house is known, and easement is acquired) normally within 3 business days the FR will stake a proposed pole location in conjunction with the customer and notify Verizon of the stake being placed. On occasion, Verizon may become involved with the pole staking if there are complications with the location, customer, or existing facilities.
 - Stake Pole > within 3 days of customer readiness
 - Work Orders created > 2-3 business days
 - Dig Safe > 1 business day
 - Schedule & Complete pole installation > within 10 business days if customer requirements are met, including tree trimming on private property.
- Verizon maintenance area: The process and timing of staking the pole varies. The majority of the time, UES will initiate a call to Verizon informing them that a pole is ready to be staked for a customer at which time one of three things occur; 1) Verizon suggests that we stake it and provide the information to them or 2) a field meeting is arranged to stake the pole together or 3) Verizon stakes the pole for our later review in the field.

Six pole (or multiple pole) sets:

- UES maintenance area: Once the project is ready for pole staking (roadway is up to grade, lot lines are staked, easement and estimated amount is acquired) the FR will contact Verizon to arrange for a field meeting in order to stake the poles together. This initial call to Verizon is normally made within three (3) business days.
 - Stake poles > normally 5 to 10 business days to arrange field meeting and stake poles.

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- Work orders created >2-3 business days
- Dig Safe > 1 business day
- Schedule and complete pole installation > within 10 business days if customer requirements are met such as tree trimming on private property.
- Verizon maintenance area: the same process takes place as in the UES maintenance area including initiating the call to Verizon to arrange for a field meeting to stake poles.

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Request No. Staff 5-10:

Electrics & VZ - Generally, when meeting with a customer for new service involving a pole set, what does your company quote the customer in terms of time to install the poles? Is the quote to the customer different if the new pole is set outside your maintenance area by a joint owner?

Response:

Please refer to response 5-9 for UES maintenance area.

Yes it is different outside the UES maintenance area. Outside of our maintenance area, we quote the customer six to eight weeks.

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Request No. Staff 5-11:

Electrics & VZ - How many service orders have been held beyond the customer due date for pole installations from January 1, 2005 to present?

Response:

To our knowledge, none, with respect to UES maintenance area, although we do not track this information in the normal course of business.

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Request No. Staff 5-12:

Electrics & VZ - How many of the service orders above could not be completed on time because of customer reasons, i.e. customer trimming, easement completion, etc. How many could not be completed on time because of company reasons, i.e. force, schedule, etc.

Response:

For customer and company reasons, none, although we do not track this information in the normal course of business.

Generally speaking, the majority of the delays and scheduling challenges that we encounter are a result of Verizon not placing the poles in a timely manner.

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Request No. Staff 5-13:

Electrics & VZ - What is the average clearance time for service orders held beyond the customer due date that were delayed for pole sets (January 1, 2005 to present)?

Response:

Unknown – This information is not tracked as normal course of business.

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Request No. Staff 5-14:

Electrics & VZ - When an installation of service requires the placement of new pole(s) at customer expense, what is the average elapsed time to estimate the cost of the work and cause the issuance of a service contract to the customer (January 1, 2006 to present)? Is this time included or excluded from the total elapsed time to provide service (i.e. date of service request to order completion date).

Response:

The average elapsed time is 7 to 13 business days. Yes, this time is included from the total elapsed time to provide service.

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Request No. Staff 5-15:

Electrics & VZ – Is there an automatic cancellation of pole orders/service requests held for company reasons if not completed in a specified period of time? If so, what is that specified period of time?

Response:

No.

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Request No. Staff 5-17:

Electrics & VZ – From January 1, 2005 to present, please provide the number of service orders held for pole installation that have exceeded 30 days, 60 days and 90 days before completion.

Response:

Unitil does not track this information in the normal course of business. However it is our practice that we do not hold any pole installation orders unless 1) field conditions do not allow for the placement of the pole, or 2) the customer has not satisfied their financial obligation (if applicable), or 3) the customer is not ready on their requested need date.

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Request No. Staff 5-18:

Electrics & VZ – Please describe the process for prioritizing service orders. What are the criteria for prioritization? How is the priority assignment reflected in the work schedule?

Response:

The prioritizing of service orders is as follows:

- 1) Customer requested need date.
- 2) The readiness of the customer (payment, easement, electrical inspections, field conditions, etc.).

The criteria described above are regularly reviewed as part of our prioritization and work schedule process.

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Request No. Staff 5-21:

Electrics & VZ – What prevents you from setting poles in your co-owner's maintenance area when your IOP permits either co-owner to provide facilities to meet their customer's timing needs?

Response:

Nothing prevents us from setting poles in the co-owner's maintenance area to provide facilities to meet customer's timing needs.

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Request No. Staff 5-22:

Electrics & VZ – Has your company experienced delays in pole sets in the co-owner's maintenance area for new dwellings/buildings and/or multi-lot residential or commercial subdivisions? If so, please explain.

Response:

Yes. It has been Unitil's experience that many projects for new dwellings/buildings and/or subdivisions have been delayed as a result of delays in Verizon pole placements or replacements.

In a subdivision, Verizon will not set service poles until they have received a customer request for service. On many occasions, when the poles are finally placed by Verizon, the customer is at the very end of their construction and readiness stages, leaving the burden on UES to schedule and turn around line work in unreasonable time frames. Unitil is regularly contacted by these customers regarding status of pole placements within Verizon maintenance areas. See Response 5-24 for the nature of these inquiries.

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Request No. Staff 5-23:

Electrics & VZ – If there is a delay in providing service to your customer as a result of a joint owner's inability to set a pole in its maintenance area in a reasonable time frame, what is your company's policy for resolving the delay?

Response:

UES' practice for resolving this is as follows:

- 1) We will proactively contact Verizon in order to identify their scheduling of projects. We will attempt to influence a higher prioritization for the customer.
- 2) We will inform the customer to contact Verizon in an effort to expedite the scheduling.
- 3) In the event that the customer is ready for service and we do not have a commitment from Verizon for placement of the pole, Unitil will proceed and perform the work in accordance with IOP #2.

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Request No. Staff 5-24:

Electrics & VZ – Do you experience customer complaints as a result of delays in pole setting for new service? Do the complaints and number of complaints differ depending on whose maintenance area is involved? If yes, please describe the nature of the complaints.

Response:

Yes we experience customer complaints as a result of delays, and yes the complaints and volume of complaints differ depending upon the maintenance area.

The nature of the complaints is as follows:

- 1) A customer/contractor will call or visit our local office inquiring about what we or they can do to expedite the pole placements by Verizon due to closings on houses or their own construction needs (trenching, driveways, etc.).
- 2) Customers/contractors frequently inquire as to "what takes so long".
- 3) Customers/contractors frequently inquire if we can place the poles instead of Verizon.
- 4) Customers/contractor frequently inquire who they can contact within Verizon to inquire about the status of their project.
- 5) We regularly receive complaints or inquiries regarding the engineering fee that Verizon requires in advance and inquires as to whether UES charges similar fees.

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Request No. Staff 5-25:

Electrics – Does your company encounter scheduling difficulties in meeting customer need dates as a result of delays or untimely pole sets in Verizon maintenance area? If yes, please describe the difficulties.

Response:

Yes, see response to Staff 5-22 for the description of difficulties.

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